



DEPAUL  
*magazine*



## CASEY COOPER (THE '91)

Founder and Owner Botanials, Inc.

**A**S A BUSINESS OWNER, MOTHER OF two and budding author whose first book is slated to be published this month, Casey Cooper barely has time to stop and smell the roses. Ironically, it's roses and lilies and hyacinths and the occasional orange mokara orchid—that are at the root of her success. Cooper is founder and owner of Botanials, Inc., a 12-year-old floral and event design firm that is known throughout Chicago and the country as one of the most creative—and quality-driven—concerns in the business. Housed in a 6,500-square-foot, state-of-the-art studio on Chicago's Elston Avenue, Botanials employs a full-time staff of 14 and a fluctuating army of as many as 80 freelance designers

and installers. Her company's work has been featured in such leading style magazines as Elle Decor, Glamour and InStyle and on television, both locally and nationally, including a collaboration with international stylist arbiter Colin Cowie for the set of The Oprah Winfrey Show's 2004 "Million Dollar Wedding Getaway." Cooper's portfolio ranges from stylish North Shore weddings to fund-raising galas at the Field Museum. Botanial even designed and produced Oprah's 50th birthday party. Cooper's jump from theater to Botanials was not as abrupt as one might think. As a Lexington, KY, teenager, she had apprenticed with several local florists, and in Chicago she continued to hone the craft while attending DePaul. After a

postgraduation stint as founding member and artistic director with Chicago's Eclipse Theatre Company. Cooper, who had continued to work as a freelance floral designer, made a tough career decision. "I had become very passionate about what I was doing with flowers and didn't have room in my life for both the theater and the business." She leapt into entrepreneurship with both feet, taking on the odd acting and voice-over gigs when she could squeeze them in. "A lot of the skills I put to use every day, I learned at The Theatre School," Cooper says. "In many ways, designing an event is like producing a show. We work with lighting, set design, fabric--it's all very theatrical and very dramatic. Every meeting with a client is like an audition." Cooper's connection with DePaul continues

to be as strong as ever. For several years she has been active with the university's Coleman Entrepreneurship Center, where in 2006 she delivered the keynote address during a weeklong series examining "Entrepreneurship and the Arts." Cooper lives in Evanston, IL., with her husband, John Nicholson, and their two children, Madeleine, 7, and Thatcher, 5. She's currently gearing up for a publicity tour for her first book, "What's Your Bridal Style?" co-authored with veteran wedding authority Sharon Naylor. The book, Cooper says, is designed to help couples discover their style, not only for the nuptial event itself, but for almost every other aspect of their lives together.

For more information about Cooper and Botanicals Inc., go to [botanicalschicago.com](http://botanicalschicago.com). 